



March 18, 2013

Dear Jason:

Thank you for taking the time to write. I have heard from many Americans regarding firearms policy and gun violence in our Nation, and I appreciate your perspective. From Aurora to Newtown to the streets of Chicago, we have seen the devastating effects gun violence has on our American family. I join countless others in grieving for all those whose lives have been taken too soon by gun violence.

Like the majority of Americans, I believe the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms. In this country, we have a strong tradition of gun ownership that has been handed down from generation to generation. Hunting and sport shooting are part of our national heritage. Yet, even as we acknowledge that almost all gun owners in America are responsible, when we look at the devastation caused by gun violence—whether in high-profile tragedies or the daily heartbreak that plagues our cities—we must ask ourselves whether we are doing enough.

While reducing gun violence is a complicated challenge, protecting our children from harm should not be a divisive one. Most gun owners agree that we can respect the Second Amendment while keeping an irresponsible, law-breaking few from inflicting harm on a massive scale. Most also agree that if we took commonsense steps to curtail gun violence, there would be fewer atrocities like the one that occurred in Newtown. We will not be able to stop every violent act, but if there is even one thing we can do to reduce gun violence—if even one life can be saved—then we have an obligation to try.

That is why I asked Vice President Joe Biden to identify concrete steps we can take to keep our children safe, help prevent mass shootings, and reduce the broader epidemic of gun violence in this country. He met with over 200 groups representing a broad cross-section of Americans and heard their best ideas. I have put forward a specific set of proposals based off of his efforts, and in the days ahead, I intend to use whatever weight this office holds to make them a reality.

My plan gives law enforcement, schools, mental health professionals, and the public health community some of the tools they need to help reduce gun violence. These tools include strengthening the background check system, helping schools hire more resource officers and counselors and develop emergency preparedness plans, and ensuring mental health professionals know their options for reporting threats of violence. And I directed the Centers for Disease Control to study the best ways to reduce gun violence—because it is critical that we understand the science behind this public health crisis.

As important as these steps are, they are not a substitute for action from Congress. To make a real and lasting difference, members of Congress must also act. As part of my comprehensive plan, I have called on them to pass some specific proposals right away. First, it is time to require a universal background check for anyone trying to buy a gun. Second, Congress should renew the 10-round limit on magazines and reinstate and strengthen the assault weapons ban. We should get tougher on those who

buy guns with the purpose of selling them to criminals, and we should impose serious punishments on anyone who helps them do this.

These are reasonable, commonsense measures that have the support of the majority of the American people. But change will not come unless the American people demand it from their lawmakers. Now is the time to do the right thing for our children, our communities, and the country we love. We owe the victims of heartbreaking national tragedies and the countless unheralded tragedies each year nothing less than our best effort—to seek consensus in order to save lives and ensure a brighter future for our children.

Thank you, again, for writing. I encourage you to visit www.WhiteHouse.gov/NowIsTheTime to learn more about my Administration's approach.

Sincerely,

Barack Obama

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